

Н. ШВЕРНИК  
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# WHAT NEXT FOR THE AMERICAN WORKERS

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*John L. ...*

## What Next for the American Workers?

It is nearly a hundred years since Marx and Engels declared, in the Communist Manifesto, that "a specter is haunting Europe — the specter of Communism."

That specter is still haunting the ruling, capitalist class, not only of Europe but of the world. And the more so now as the objective conditions throughout the world are fast approaching the point where Communism provides the only solution for the problems of increasingly vast numbers of people, and particularly of the working class as a whole.

But the ruling class, in its efforts to exorcize the specter of Communism, has conjured up a specter of its own—the specter of Fascism. It tells the workers, in effect, that if they revolt against their degrading conditions of existence — if they make any move which threatens the interests of that class — it will simply lead to Fascism; in other words, that they will find themselves clamped down under a military dictatorship exercised by the capitalist class in its own interest, and that therefore the only thing for the workers to do is to bear patiently with their present wretched lot and hope for the best.

That is the cry of Hearst, for instance, who still pretends to be equally opposed to both Communism and Fascism, while at the same time he advocates fascist methods in suppressing all stirrings of discontent on the part of the workers and denounces as communism every attempt to improve their



conditions on the part of a capitalist government which he himself helped to put into power. The value of those attempts we shall discuss later; here we merely mention the fact that they have been made, in a desperate effort to prop up the falling structure of capitalism and to instill new hope into the masses of people whom capitalism depends upon for support, and that those attempts have met with a very cold reception from such a typical tory and future fascist as Hearst.

But the specter of fascism has become more than a specter. It has taken on flesh and blood — and exacted the flesh and blood of thousands of workers — over a large area of Europe. We have no need of a fascist manifesto to tell us what fascism is in reality. We know that it represents the despairing efforts of the ruling class to hold on to its power and profits. We know that however much the capitalists and bourgeoisie generally may like to prate of the virtues of patriotism and nationalism or proclaim their devotion to liberty, the constitution and established institutions, these things mean nothing to them when the question is one of maintaining their own interests. Their "liberty" is liberty for the bourgeoisie — the liberty to exploit and enslave the workers. Their constitution will be preserved by them only so long as there is no real menace to that liberty, and whenever that menace becomes at all acute, the constitution will be thrown overboard and resort will be had to open dictatorship — as was done in Germany, 1933. Their patriotism doesn't stand in the way of calling on foreign assistance for suppressing the organizations, however peaceful, of their own working population — as was recently done in Austria by Starhemberg

when he received large supplies of munitions from the fascist government of Italy for his unprovoked assault on the Austrian workers.

So we see that even in the absence of revolutionary tendencies on the part of the workers, even though they meekly accept what little the present system still has to give, they are still not safe from assault. The very possibility that they may some day rise in revolt against intolerable conditions — especially when the capitalists know that those conditions are bound to become still more intolerable — is sufficient to cause those capitalists to set their fascist hordes on the war path against them. And this is still **possible** for the capitalists because — especially since the Russian Revolution — they and their lackeys have acquired great skill in the arts of demagoguery, by which they lead large numbers of workers to associate their interests with those of the ruling class, and also because they have plenty of money at their disposal and there are plenty of unemployed who are willing to serve them as gunmen in the lack of other means of subsistence.

## II

From the foregoing, it seems to us there is only one conclusion to be drawn, and the sooner the better, by all workers; namely, the absolute necessity for joining their comrades in working-class organizations devoted to the defense against fascism and to the eventual overthrow of capitalism.

Even if the present so-called depression were but temporary (which it is not), we submit that the workers have everything to gain by adopting a militant attitude.

First, with reference to their immediate needs — the question of adequate relief for the millions of



workers who are unemployed and of adequate wages for those who still have jobs of a sort. Nothing would suit the employers better than to have the workers meekly submit to slow starvation, or possibly resort to suicide, rather than stand up and fight for their existence. And slow starvation or suicide will be their lot unless they combine and force their demands upon the ruling class and its government, whose primary concern is naturally the maintenance of profits and the preservation of the profit system, to which the relief of suffering is only incidental. The more determination and strength is revealed by the workers, the more adequately will they be clothed, sheltered and fed. Lying down and waiting will get them nothing but contempt and a few extra kicks.

Besides, a militant attitude on the part of the workers is in reality the best assurance against the triumph of fascism, even though in the first instance it may force the development of the fascist forces and bring them out into the open. Many a potential fascist will be deterred from entering the service of the bourgeoisie and will come over to our side if he sees that the workers have the will to defend and assert themselves. Even now, if we will, we can make it very unpleasant for these flunkies of the ruling class; and since — as we shall attempt to show later on — the workers are sure to win in the end anyhow, we can make it still more unpleasant for them hereafter. It was largely the lack of a militant attitude on the part of the German workers in 1933, and especially the lack of any preparation for combating fascism with working-class weapons such as a general strike, that led to the triumph of Hitler. The fascists (capitalists) won in Germany because the German workers were not united and

especially because neither of the two great workers' parties of Germany was really revolutionary. Even the Communist Party there had become a mere voting and propaganda machine, like the other political parties, and was concentrating all its efforts on winning a majority in the Reichstag; so that when it became necessary for capital to make its great drive against the workers in order still further to beat down their standard of living, they could only retire from the field without a struggle. The workers must be united and prepared to take advantage of all opportunities if their lot is not to become still worse than at present.

There is also the matter of war. The various capitalist powers, or the ruling classes of the different countries in which capitalism prevails, will sooner or later be forced to attempt to settle some of their conflicts and rivalries by armed force. Such a solution would of course be no solution at all for the workers, and would finally result in still further lowering their standard of living and bring about a stage of barbarism from which the world would be centuries in recovering. There is only one force in capitalist society which can avert that situation, and, when it threatens, convert it into a means of abolishing war for all time to come: that force is the workers themselves, on whom the capitalists must depend for their war supplies. But they must be organized and ready to act. If they are so organized and ready, their very existence may be sufficient to deter a desperate ruling class from having recourse to that barbarous instrument. But war is inherent in capitalism, and will be a sword hanging over the head of humanity as long as the system endures.



### III

A period of economic collapse is the heyday of messiahs. Quacks and ignoramuses of all descriptions flourish on the gullibility of a public whose mode of existence, including the formal "education" it has received, has not prepared it to recognize the need for radical change. We have all been led to believe that our institutions are perfect, or as nearly so as possible in an imperfect world, and that they were made to endure forever. The most that the average citizen would concede to the radicals is that they might be better manned and a patch applied here and there. He pins his faith on individuals, and fails to see that the individual's power and radius of action are strictly limited by the social and economic situation in which we find ourselves. He engages with great enthusiasm in "better government" campaigns and whoops it up for the honest man he would like to see in office. He wants to "turn the rascals out," and can't believe that they will inevitably be replaced by another set of rascals, subject to the same temptations and influences and bound by the same forces under the same capitalistic setup. On the lower levels of enlightenment, this passion turns naturally into fascism and serves the purposes of the rascals themselves; that is, it is directed against racial and religious minorities (Jews, Negroes, Catholics, etc.), who are used as scapegoats by the capitalist class for the purpose of diverting attention from the real enemy, which is capitalism itself. In this way the workers become divided among themselves on purely fictitious issues, and are prevented from making common cause on the basis of their genuine economic needs. The

recent Hitler movement in Germany is the classic example of this sort of bourgeois demagoguery.

Here in the U. S. A. we have a very charming and possibly guileless bourgeois messiah, who is probably too much of a gentleman to resort to the cruder forms of fascist demagoguery. Roosevelt is just innocent enough to take himself seriously. — innocent in the sense that his understanding of economics is on such a level that any communist youth could laugh him out of court. He was going to save the farmers, and the result of his efforts was the greatest spontaneous outbreak of violence on the part of the farming population in the history of the country. He was going to be the champion of the "forgotten man" — that is, of the petty-bourgeois shopkeeper and business man — and the result of his efforts has been to drive them nearer to bankruptcy and to strengthen the very monopolistic forces he was out to curb. He was going to raise wages and at least **diminish** unemployment among the working class, and the result of his efforts has been a little leveling of the general impoverishment, with some workers reemployed for a time and others thrown onto the street, and any rise in wages more than counterbalanced by the increased cost of living.

All this, however, was not the fault of Roosevelt personally, nor of any other individual or set of individuals. The "new deal" administration was doing the best it could, and perhaps the best possible, in the circumstances. All these charming amateurs simply had not realized that capitalism had served its day and exhausted its possibilities for human advancement or for serving the needs of the great mass of the people dependent upon it for support.



Roosevelt and his collegiate "brain trust" are cultured chaps who have received more or less of the conventional, cut-and-dried education provided in the standardized educational institutions set up by the ruling class and, in so far as human ingenuity could devise, made perfectly safe for that class. And their social position and mode of life have not been such as to lead them to an understanding of the real problems of present society. Roosevelt, like the average man on the street, takes it for granted that the capitalistic institutions under which he was brought up are of quasi-divine origin — a sort of gift from on high — and must be preserved in all essentials for all time to come. And he no doubt regards it as his special mission on earth to preserve them: on the one hand, from the wicked radicals who would do away with them altogether, and on the other, from the blind reactionaries who would allow them to perish for want of a little mending.

But even if Roosevelt himself, or any number of his advisors were, or should later become, convinced that capitalism is now unworkable and belongs to the scrap heap, there would still be nothing for him to do but follow along in the course he has marked out, and which will inevitably lead toward fascism. Even assuming that his class allegiance would not prevent him in such a situation from taking the side of the workers and doing everything in his power to bring about a socialist state of society, — and there is nothing in his career or utterances to date to justify such an assumption, — he would still be powerless to effect a single radical change in the existing setup. He depends for support on a party which is no less capitalistic and conservative than the G. O. P. His financial backing is furnished by a small group of millionaire parasites whose only

interest in the "New Deal" is to get the old capitalistic machine cranked up again and in running order until the next crash. And he is bound by his oath of office to "preserve, protect and defend" our eighteenth-century constitution (interpreted and applied to suit the needs of the ruling class of monopoly capitalism) even though the heavens fall and the babies go naked. And more important still, the capitalist class, with the wealth and influence at its disposal, would make it physically impossible to carry the program out — except to bury it. In short, Roosevelt is just as tightly bound up with and conditioned by capitalism here as Hitler is in Germany. However much they may differ temperamentally or as personalities, their economic programs are practically identical — and necessarily so, since they are both out to **save capitalism** by any and all possible means — and their performances have been equally ludicrous in the face of their promises.

#### IV

Why was it that the Roosevelt program has failed and will necessarily continue to do so? As we have already indicated, it was not the fault of Roosevelt personally or of his advisors. It was not due even to their weakness in economics, however lamentable that may be. Their weakness in economics and their capitalistic prejudices were necessary conditions for their ever undertaking the program at all. This is not to say, however, that the economic understanding of the Republican Party, or of its leadership, is any better. The G.O.P. would perhaps have refrained, at least for a time yet, from entering upon such a venture, but simply because its leadership is too stodgy and too reactionary to conceive the need for any change whatever



from the old competitive capitalism that flourished back in the days of William McKinley. Roosevelt has advanced as far as the present so-called liberal position, which centers around the idea of a **planned** capitalist economy, designed to eliminate some of the worst abuses of old-style (*laissez faire*) capitalism and to preserve what are called its good features. In a word, the present Democratic leadership may be said to have realized the need for changing the system, even though it has not yet realized the need for doing away with it. And of course the realization of this latter need is not to be expected from bourgeois politicians whose interests are thoroughly bound up with the **preservation** of capitalism.

The Roosevelt program has failed, and will continue to fail, simply because it is based on false assumptions or premises. It fails to take into account the enormous changes which have been brought about through capitalism itself in the course of its development — changes which have made the capitalist social relations (the shell of existing society) too narrow for the productive forces at our disposal. These social relations, including especially private ownership of the means of production and hence production for private profit instead of for human needs, have resulted in a great expansion of our productive apparatus and in a vast concentration of wealth in the hands of a very small per cent of the population. The encouragement given to science and invention has resulted in rapid technological advance, so that more and more goods could be produced at smaller cost and with less demand for human labor. And since, in the last analysis, the capitalists depend for the profits upon the **exploitation** of human labor, the rate of profit con-

stantly fell, the workers received an ever smaller share of the products of their labor, the competition between the various capitalists and groups of capitalists grew sharper, and the army of unemployed grew greater.

The thing which we all have to realize is that capitalism tends to breakdown (as during the last five years) and to final collapse as a result of its own inner laws and contradictions, regardless of who is in control and regardless of all the efforts made to avert it. Within the capitalist so-called system, all the conditions have now been developed which make it absolutely imperative that capitalism be done away with and replaced by a new form of social organization. To speak in figurative language: capitalism has all this time been sitting on an egg, slowly hatching the seeds of its own abolition. It has created not only a set of conditions which make its further existence unendurable, but has also engendered the great class of enslaved workers, the proletariat, whose historical mission it is to set it aside. Not only is Communism the only logical and honest **alternative** to capitalism (regarded as a more or less anarchic system of private exploitation), but it is the only logical and the only possible next step in social evolution. In short, Communism arises out of capitalism just as naturally as capitalism did out of feudalism, and meets with the same sort of obstacles from the beneficiaries of the present property relations — obstacles which will again have to be overcome by revolutionary action. Roosevelt, like the regular fascist dictators, is simply trying to keep the chick — the communist society — from bursting out of the egg which capitalism has hatched. But if those efforts are continued long enough, he will find that the egg has been converted into a bomb.



The New Deal is nothing more than what has been called the "revolution of the Babbitts" — a nice, respectable, middle-class, church-going **substitute** for a revolution; that is, for the only sort of revolution that means anything **to the workers** and is worthy of the name. It still finds its few real supporters (aside from the party hacks) only among the incurable liberals and the milder socialists, — those pure and timid souls who shrink at the thought of any sort of violence, regardless of the cause in which it is employed, and who must therefore continue to hope for a peaceful transition from capitalism to the "cooperative commonwealth". Though they may be disappointed with the results to date, and even be forced to admit that those results have been practically nil, they still cling to the hope that the miracle will or might somehow happen. This hope finally reduces to an expression of their petty-bourgeois ideology — a hope that a return of capitalist prosperity may yet be possible and that the unpleasant task of changing the system can be avoided. American liberalism lives on the various "Deals" and "Freedoms" that spring from the heads of bourgeois ideologists. These are the white hopes excreted by capitalism in times of trouble — the captive balloons in the hands of the ruling class and which serve for a time to distract the public's attention from earthly realities. And a liberal always has his alibi by which the door is left open for a new white hope to come fluttering in and rise aloft; as, for example, the statement that Roosevelt has merely not gone far enough and fast enough in the way of socialism. As if Roosevelt were, or could possibly be, interested in socialism, and not merely in putting capitalism back on its feet!

## V

The liberals have their reasons, in the present juncture, for trotting out their "planned economy". Those reasons are all rooted in the fact that, as Robert Briffault has said, the chief concern of a liberal is to prevent civilization from being amended by revolutionists. The liberals would like to be radical, but they shrink from accepting the logical consequences of such a position. The result is that they more or less unwittingly play into the hands of the reactionaries by keeping up the illusions about reforming capitalism and growing gradually into something resembling socialism. And their idea of socialism consists largely in planning, without very much thought or care as to the economic system on which it is based, the people by whom it is accomplished or the **class** which it will primarily serve.

Planning is in reality the only remaining hope for capitalism in its present stage of development, now that its possibilities for further expansion, both at home and abroad, are strictly limited. But even that hope has proved illusory, and can be shown to be so on purely theoretical grounds. We must confine ourselves here to a mere hint at the obstacles involved.

The only condition in which capitalism really thrives is that of an ever greater possibility of exploitation. Capitalism can prosper only by continual accumulation — new investments in raw materials and means of production, more appropriation of unpaid labor power. This leads to the over-accumulation of capital, resulting in crises, intensified competition, international rivalry in the quest for additional



profits, imperialism, wars, etc. But the need for accumulation — and for improved methods of production — brings with it a fall in the proportion of capital which can be expended on labor (variable or wage capital). Not only do workers become increasingly superfluous, but even the wages of those who are still employed must be continually reduced if capitalism is to have a chance of weathering the crisis. Wages must be cut in order to increase the insufficient capital required for accumulation, which alone means prosperity. So that the continuance of capitalism means, of necessity, the permanent and absolute pauperization of the workers. A capitalist equilibrium between production and consumption is impossible. Capitalism can function and overcome its crisis only through constant widening of the gap between production and consumption, and this eventually leaves to the workers no other recourse than revolution.

In such a situation, the old-fashioned bourgeois politician of the Hoover type can only wait and hope that the "natural" forces of recovery will sooner or later assert themselves. (They have done so in previous depressions, but the length and virulence of the present crisis have shown that the forces directed against collapse have now been neutralized — lost their effectiveness as economic stimulants.) The more up-to-date ones, like Roosevelt, begin to dream of a capitalist planned economy. But the planning itself, as they will soon be forced to realize, is only a further contradiction. It is contradictory in the sense, first, that real planning is impossible while the means of production, as under capitalism, are owned and operated by private individuals or groups, each with its special interests to protect (and with the power to protect them in spite of the

government): and secondly, in the sense that capitalism is **inherently anarchic**, requiring to be left to the play of individual initiative, free competition, — so that even if the planning should prove successful in bringing us out of the present crisis, it would immediately be thrown overboard by the capitalists themselves, with the open or tacit consent of the government, and would soon be followed by a still worse crisis.

Capitalist planning really presupposes a **stationary** capitalism in order to be effective (and that only from the point of view of the capitalists themselves). But such a capitalism is only another name for the permanent crisis, which eventually means collapse. The Roosevelt experiment in planned economy finally reduces to a more or less conscious admission that the crisis is permanent. Hence the various plans for providing, after a fashion and at least (it is hoped) until after the next presidential election, for **some** of the unemployed (in order to take them off the relief rolls and keep them off the streets, away from radical propaganda, as any fascist regime might do): subsistence homesteads, public works projects, labor camps, etc.

But never a thought of converting our great productive apparatus into a means of serving the needs of a classless society instead of the capitalists' needs for profits.

## VI

We have said, in effect, that the New Deal is a Sunday-school revolution. Let no one be deceived, however, about its ultimate character. Though it is not a revolution at all in the real sense of the word, because it leaves intact all the essentials of capitalism, it does contain the germs of a violent upheaval. That upheaval, however, so far as concerns



the Administration, will not be directed against capitalism, but against any attempt to disrupt its bases.

The N. R. A., with its concentration of power in Washington, has merely served the capitalists as an object lesson in the necessity of strengthening their hold (which was always strong enough) on the governmental apparatus, backed by the army and police. Roosevelt and his lieutenants may code and reform as much as they like, but the capitalists have nothing to fear so long as they themselves have the final word — and the final thrust. And these they will have so long as the workers remain a mere sprawling mass without cohesion or fighting spirit — for the simple reason that capitalists must have profits or cease to be capitalists, and what sort of a capitalist government would that be which failed to maintain its capitalists?

Capitalists, to capitalism, are the salt of the earth; society couldn't function without them. But **workers** are cheap, plentiful, and on the way to becoming almost superfluous. Workers are of little use any more even for buying the capitalists' wares, even as consumers; half of them haven't any money to buy with, and the other half are continually annoying the capitalists with demands for a larger share of the products, for better working conditions, etc. Why not let them starve, or class them as Reds and shoot them down, thus sparing all this horrendous affair of changing our sacred institutions?

That is the way the good bourgeois, his hands clutching his money bags, reasons with himself in the privacy of his curtained office. And he not only reasons thus — **he practices it!** We need not go to Austria or to Germany for examples. Look at San Francisco! The bourgeois has the guns, he has the

government, and he has the press — and when those are not sufficient or forthcoming, he has the hired thugs. He has Hearst, he has Johnson (the General) and he has a whole horde of aspiring little Hitlers. He doesn't need to wait for an order from Washington or Sacramento to bring out the **militia**, when workers strike for the most elementary right to a half-decent existence. He organizes the "Vigilantes", he seduces the A. F. of L., he rounds up posses of ruffians — and to that end he opens his purse-strings generously. The bourgeois — the boss — always has money for keeping the workers suppressed, though he may have none for raising their wages. Just as his government always finds money for waging war to protect the interests of the bourgeois, though it may have none for relieving the victims of his precious capitalism.

Yes, workers are cheap; they can live on almost nothing, if they have to live at all — thinks the bourgeois. But what if they should demand to be regarded as human beings, instead of slaves of the bourgeois? What if they refused to work for him — when he has work to be done? What if they should insist on working for themselves, and take the bourgeois' factory away from him? What if they then secured for themselves a standard of living and educational advantages and leisure somewhat comparable to those enjoyed by the bourgeois himself? Those things have happened, we know. It is fairly easily done when the workers learn to **distrust the bourgeois** as he deserves, and get together and mean business.

## VII

We have said that the New Deal leaves intact all the essentials of capitalism: private ownership of the means of production, production for private



profit, profit as the main-spring of human activity, with a premium on mere money-making and parasitism. Not only are those essentials left unaltered — and will continue so under any administration which can be elected under the auspices of capitalism — but the capitalist **mode of thought**, the ideology to which capitalism gives rise and which makes its continuance still possible, has actually been strengthened. The bourgeois demagogue Hearst with his cry of communism directed at certain of Roosevelt's policies is merely an ass braying at the moon, and shows (if he is honest) that he knows no more about communism than what he reads in his own papers. Communism, to hear him talk, is largely a matter of "regimentation" — that is, regimentation for the bourgeoisie, for his own class; just as capitalism (though he wouldn't admit it) is regimentation — **and starvation** — for the proletariat. One other thing which communism means to Hearst — though this is a point which he is careful not to emphasize — is **expropriation**. That **would** be a calamity — for the red-baiting yellow journalist with a lovely estate in California!

But what has the "National Run Around" to do with this? Nothing, except that the great Lord Hearst is a bit too zealous in running up to defend the interests of his class. His red phobia has quite blinded him to the fact that the "new deal" liberalism was just the thing that was needed, after the failure of the stodgy Hoover, to give capitalism a new lease on life, by instilling into the masses fresh illusions of capitalist prosperity and holding in check the radicalism which threatened to become rampant. The trouble was — from the Hearst point of view — that the workers were somehow given the idea that they had a right to organize in their

own unions instead of those controlled by the bosses; they might get the impression that they were actual human beings with certain rights of their own instead of mere wage slaves who lived at the sufferance of their masters. That — from the good old tory ("old-fashioned American") point of view — was not to be tolerated. It would lead to strikes and would interfere with profits; the employers might run short of money for hiring scabs and thugs — and the whole system might go down in a revolution. Roosevelt had been indiscreet, but what else could he do? He had promised almost everything to everybody, and he could hardly give the workers less than a 7-A — especially as it could hardly mean anything, anyhow.

But Roosevelt's intentions, good or bad, are of no importance. The fact always remains that the capitalists have the last word. The will of any government, even the most radical, is a mere scrap of paper in the conditions created by modern capitalism. No matter what laws are passed in the interest of the workers, no matter what reforms are put though on paper, they can be circumvented in any number of ways by the few plutocrats who hold the power of life or death over the millions not only of city workers but of farmers as well. And if all other methods of circumvention fail, there always remains the method of violence — of terrorization by means of the thugs fished up out of the slums which are a natural product of capitalism, and with the aid of the more backward lower middle-class elements slowly dropping into the ranks of the proletariat and therefore struggling all the harder to keep up a respectable appearance by coming out on the side of the ruling class.



## VIII

We think it is plain by now that revolution provides the only way out of the mess. Not so much because of the perversity of the capitalists as individuals — we don't deny that there are some very gentlemanly and even kind-hearted ones among them, though under present conditions, in which their survival becomes increasingly difficult, the exceptions become increasingly rare — but rather because of the system itself in which they as well as the rest of us are bound.

Yes, the capitalists must be saved from their own stupidity, but it can't be done along liberal and reformist paths. Capitalism must be exterminated, or it will exterminate us — if not by mass starvation, then by a new world slaughter.

But what, we may ask, are the prospects for revolution, in such a state of affairs, where the masses of human beings, including most of the so-called educated elements, are kept in the blindest ignorance of the most elementary facts of economics and are taught to confuse "patriotism" (regarded as the lord of the virtues) with loyalty to the ruling class and its purely commercial interests without regard either to their own welfare or that of society as a whole.

At first glance, it would seem as if even the revolutionary way is blocked and that nothing remains but to wait like sheep for the slaughter. But let us look at the matter more closely.

Whether capitalism drags along — and humanity with it — in its death agony indefinitely or is brought to a speedy and happy end, depends on the workers themselves. If the workers take the correct position, and stick to it, everything else comes of itself.

Not that the workers will stand alone in the struggle. They will have their allies — and plenty of them — not only among the middle-class "intellectuals" who have realized the absurdity of any further playing with capitalism, but increasingly among the impoverished non-proletarian masses as well. For the present, however, these allies can do little more than wait for the workers to take a definitely revolutionary stand and to show they are ready to help themselves.

To this end, the labor movement as it developed during the upgrade period of capitalism must be broken up and completely reorganized. As it exists today, it is rather a hindrance to revolutionary activity because it stands in the way of united action by the working class as a whole. It erects a wall between one group of workers, the more skilled, on the one hand, and the great mass of the unskilled and unorganized on the other. The former group, organized mostly in the trade unions of the A. F. of L., under reactionary leadership, are still concerned merely with improving their own condition within the framework of capitalism and at the expense of the great mass of the unorganized. As long as they occupy such a privileged position, they can not be won for really vital struggles and will be a natural prey to fascist tendencies. For, as the crisis deepens, the employers will grant these groups special concessions in return for their neutrality in the class struggle, hoping in this way to suppress the militant workers first and to leave the "labor aristocracy" to be dealt with later.

All workers must be brought to realize that their standard of living under the present permanent crisis of capitalism is bound to decline constantly, that their old-fashioned peaceful unions can not



improve their condition but at best only make them a little less miserable than their comrades on the outside, and that the capitalists, in order to maintain profits, will be constrained to liquidate the whole independent labor movement eventually — here in the U. S. A. just as has already been done in Austria, Germany, Italy, etc.

The labor movement of the future must take the form of **workers' councils** (soviets), where the leadership is supplied, not by the reactionary bureaucrats interested in holding on to lucrative jobs and making their peace with the capitalists, but by **committees of action** formed from the ranks of the workers themselves. These councils will arise in all places where large numbers of workers are brought together — factories, relief agencies, civil works projects, etc. — and will be coordinated on a national and international scale above all parties and bureaucracies and solely with a view to combating fascism (capitalism) and to ushering in the new society.

Political parties become a thing of the past. Voting and praying and all the hypocritical paraphernalia of "democracy" are left to the bourgeoisie. The one and sufficient form of the future labor movement are the fighting organizations of the proletariat, the workers' councils, which will not only seize the power but exercise it thereafter.

The workers will bear the brunt of the struggle for the simple reason that they are the most numerous, the most easily organized for effective action and have the most to gain. If they show themselves worthy of the cause in which they are fighting, their ranks will be swelled continually by new recruits from all the various social strata whose interests also are at odds with those of the few exploiters who

go to make up the class of capitalists. Most of these middle strata have very little concern with the matter as yet, one way or the other; they will either be neutral or they will flock to the side that seems most likely to win. The militant stand of the workers will not only tend to arouse their admiration and sympathy; it will also curtail the capitalists' profits and make it more and more difficult for those capitalists, and their government, to hire the gunmen by which alone the system can be maintained. A part at least of the army, as well as national guard, will finally desert them and go over to the workers, their class comrades, within whose ranks are many of their own relatives and friends. Even the blindest worshippers of the status quo will realize that there can no longer be any peace under capitalism, even within the borders of a single country, and will see the necessity of the new social order.

## IX

Yes, the capitalists have the guns, at present. But the men behind those guns have to be hired — and **kept**. And those men — most of them — are the natural allies of the workers themselves. Even their patriotism, if nothing else, will soon revolt at shooting down their own countrymen for the sake of larger profits for millionaires.

Besides, the shooting **can soon be stopped** by the workers themselves, if they are united. **By striking**, they can not only refuse to transport the munitions required by the capitalistic forces; they can also refuse to **make** them, or can use those that they do make for arming **their own forces** exclusively. The tables will be completely turned in a very short space of time.



For workers are not so unimportant, after all, however little they may enter into the calculations of the capitalists. The reason why they **appear** to be so is that they very rarely refuse to do the capitalists' bidding and are so meek and humble in making their little demands. They come to be taken for granted as safe for capitalism, like the machines they tend. But the fact nevertheless remains that the capitalists are completely at the mercy of those workers, both for the daily necessities of life and for the means of waging war — war not only against their foreign rivals, but against the workers themselves. For this reason alone — if for no others — the capitalistic shooting will have to be strictly limited.

In the **class war** — to paraphrase the famous Napoleonism — God is **not** eventually on the side of the heaviest artillery. Guns themselves are of little account when all the historical factors at work are enlisted on the other side. Each of the two opposed classes has weapons peculiar to itself. The bourgeoisie — the decaying and slipping class which has had its day — can only rely on the power of force when confronted with the rising class, the proletariat, which its form of economy has brought into being. For the base of the bourgeoisie grows ever narrower as capital keeps on accumulating and being monopolized into fewer and fewer hands. The proletariat — which may now be taken as equivalent to all workers in general — has behind it the whole productive apparatus on which our civilization is built and without which no society can exist. A handful of capitalists have the presumption to say that that apparatus belongs to them to do with as they please; but the workers — the men and women who actually turn the levers and throw the

switches — can show them differently. The workers can show them that the productive forces of society are a social heritage, which has been created by the workers themselves and which can no longer be left to the blind caprice of the capitalist market, under pain of economic collapse and social disintegration. They can, if they stand together, refuse to work for the capitalists, and they can insist on working in spite of the capitalists. In other words, they can let the capitalists go hang for their profits, and abolish the whole profit system with its mass starvation and misery. And they not only **can**, but will actually **be obliged to** sooner or later for the sake of their own preservation and that of society itself. And hence the proletariat will have increasingly behind it all the enlightened opinion of that society. The capitalists will be more and more thrown upon their own resources; and their hirelings will dwindle away.

Capitalism here in the United States still has a few cards left to play. But let us have no illusions regarding their value or the purpose for which they will be produced. Various sops will be ladled out as the situation grows more desperate, in order to keep the workers quiet and bolster up their faith in the system a little longer. We may have some sort of unemployment insurance eventually, but at most it will be barely enough to prevent starvation and in all probability will be paid for out of the wages of the workers themselves, when they happen to be employed. All sorts of fantastic schemes will be proposed, by sentimental old ladies of either sex and by aspiring fascist dictators, for **reforming** capitalism so as to avoid doing anything about the one thing that **has to be done**; that is, **abolishing** it — expropriating the capitalists. Upton Sinclair, the



renegade socialist, and Huey Long, the Kingfish with an appetite for suckers, have already presented theirs. But let the workers beware. All these bourgeois reformists are either innocently or with design serving the purposes of the capitalists by throwing a red herring across the trail. We may say to Sinclair that now, in the permanent crisis, is the time to prepare for **getting rid of capitalism** and not for silly attempts to make it a little more endurable. While the utopians ply their trade of misleading the masses and getting elected to office, the workers go on freezing and starving and the capitalists go on pocketing their profits and preparing for another war.

The "great illusion" is not so much war itself as it is the **reformist illusion** which believes that war can be abolished short of abolishing capitalism. The lesson which this generation has to learn is that a rotten system **can not be reformed**; it can only be done away with. We must learn to say Yes or No, whether to Capitalism or to the Church — accept them or reject them outright, not try to reform or modernize or compromise with them. Attempts to reform them merely serve to distract attention from the real job and lead logically to something worse — in the one case to fascism and in the other to fundamentalism and bibliolatry.

A German militarist has said that American soldiers will not fight except to ameliorate their condition. Coming from a reactionary, that, of course, was not intended as a compliment, and is probably no more true of the American than of the soldiers of other nationalities. But if it were true of the soldiers throughout the world, and not only of the soldiers but of the workers as well, it would be the best possible augury for the communist revo-

lution and the future of civilization. To fight for their own interests is to fight for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of an economic system based upon human needs instead of exploitation and profit — not merely for a few more crumbs from the table of Ford or Mellon, but for a workers' world in which all parasitism has been abolished. Capitalism in its present stage of development means fascism, and fascism means barbarism.

The choice still stands: **Communism or Barbarism!**

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